

Liverpool Diocesan Board of Divinity Publications

No. VII.

THE APOLOGY OF EXPERIENCE

THE LIVERPOOL LECTURE, 1913

DELIVERED IN

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, LIVERPOOL, ON 2 JUNE, 1913

BY THE RIGHT REV.

W. BOYD CARPENTER, D.D., D.C.L.

CANON OF WESTMINSTER AND FORMERLY LORD BISHOP OF RIPON

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
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BR 110 .C345 1913
Carpenter, William Boyd,
1841-1918.
The apology of experience

THE APOLOGY OF EXPERIENCE.

ONE great canon of modern science is that theories must be built upon facts. It is an intelligible rule. Much intellectual mischief has been done by those who have invented a theory and then hunted for facts to prove it. On the other hand, it must be remembered that many of the theories which are now established by the evidence of facts were at the first brilliant guesses. Genius hazarded some hypotheses which later investigation proved to be true. There is no harm in ventilating theories when it is well understood that they must be verified before they can be accepted. Thus it happens that in the world of thought many theories are held to be merely working hypotheses which may be proved hereafter to be incorrect, but which meanwhile are found useful in the pursuit of truth. Indeed, are not some of the most important and well-known laws of nature acknowledged to be working hypotheses, which larger knowledge may set aside?

Two general principles here become clear. One tells us that the best working method is to collect facts before formulating theories : the other reminds us that there is some value in a working hypothesis : indeed without it investigation might stand still.

Our subject is religious experience. I desire first to treat it on the principle of ascertaining facts before laying down a theory. I may hazard a theory later.

I. Can such experiences be treated as belonging to the

realm of fact? I admit the danger and difficulty of grounding an apologetic argument upon religious experience; and yet I feel that there is room for such a presentation of Christian evidences. I admit the danger; for it is fatal to the security of any argument if it can be pointed out that it has its origin and force only in a series of emotions. It is then dismissed as being subjective, and therefore beyond the power of verification: it has no more validity than our dreams: it is as a vapour that passeth away.

I admit the danger, and yet I am confronted by the continued assertion that the argument from within is an argument, clear, convincing, inevitable. Sacred writers, ancient and modern, cling to it: it appears, and for a time it may be forgotten: it is discredited and set aside; but it reappears. What we read in Deuteronomy finds a place also in St. John. The affirmation of credibility is within. "Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend. The word is nigh thee in thy heart." St. John declares, "He that believeth hath the witness in himself": St. Paul is not otherwise minded. He cites from Deuteronomy and gives a Christian turn to the thought: there is no need to call down Christ from Heaven to convince the soul. The word is nigh thee: it brings its own evidence. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness (Rom. x. 6-10).

I might multiply quotations to show that the argument from the witness within was accepted and understood by Christian thinkers of subsequent ages. It is not to be supposed that men of honest and reflective dispositions can have overlooked the precarious nature of an argument which could be crushed at once by being ridiculed as emotional and unverifiable.

Therefore while fully aware of the snares which lie alongside the path, I feel constrained to suggest that there may be some sure and justifiable ground for advancing the apology from experience.

(i) We must take care to meet the first objection that such experiences are merely subjective impressions. If we can show that the word experience is not used in the sense of mere subjective or emotional impression, but that it covers certain verifiable facts, then experience takes on a meaning more acceptable to scientific demands.

Can we show that this is the case? First, let us consider what factors are needed to give validity to this argument.

The very word experience implies two things—a thing which is experienced and a mind or soul which has been the subject of it. If I experience an emotion, there must have been some cause for the emotion; and the cause must be very real which can create not merely emotion, but a vigorous concentration of will-power, resulting in a great and real change in habit, life, or custom.

Let me give an illustration. The Sufite Movement is a fact in Mohammedan history. No reasonable man will deny its existence: it arose in the 8th century: it exercised a powerful influence over men's minds: it became strong enough to endure against opposition: it abides to-day, unexpelled from the bosom of the Faith. It is a fact of history. But this fact of history is a complex fact. It is built up of a number of lesser facts. It began—it is said—with a woman, who felt that the idea of love found but a small place in the God of Mohammed. Feeling this she "taught that God must be loved above all things, because He alone is worthy of love; and that everything here below must be sacrificed in the hope of one day attaining to union with God" (Prof. Nöldeke, "Encycl.

Brit."). This idea spread : it took hold of the hearts of men. Now here is a broad historical fact, which includes a large number of other facts. The historical fact is the Sufite Movement : the included facts are the changes wrought in many minds, besides the initial fact—the dawn of the thought of Divine love in the mind of a woman Rabī'a.

Whatever emotions may be involved in the story, the Sufite Movement is undoubtedly a series of facts. We cannot verify each fact, i.e. the fact of the influence upon thought and life made by each disciple won to Sufism ; but the resultant movement is an admitted fact, and equally so the individual actions which increased the number of its adherents were facts, which only the lunacy of scepticism can doubt. Such a movement might be illustrated by the great belt-like procession of ants in West Africa : the invasion of the army of ants is a fact : the boa-constrictor knows it to be a terrible fact, and provides for his safety against it ; but equally with the army of ants each individual ant is a fact : and taken together they are the series of facts which make up the army. So the Sufite Movement is an assemblage of facts and each convert to the movement is a fact.

But what is the nature of the fact in these cases ? The fact is a convert—not a man merely but a man subject to a certain emotion, which made him act in a certain way. The essence of the fact is in all the circumstances which wrought a change in the man's life : it is this which makes the man a fact in the movement.

(a) Religious experiences certainly include facts. Religious experience therefore is not purely subjective. Subjective emotions no doubt play some part in the matter ; but the experience includes the act as well as

the emotional disturbance : the act of becoming an adherent of the movement is a fact, and the conflict of emotions within his heart before he became an adherent is a fact also. The subjective emotion preceded the act of adherence, but the fact of the emotion is as real as the fact that he became a Sufite. The emotion and the consequent action are both facts as the waves and the wind that stirs them are facts.

Feelings are in themselves facts—facts, that is, within our own consciousness. They are not, however, verifiable facts, and however true in the consciousness, feelings, as such, do not emerge into the region of observed facts. We admit it: feelings are not facts which can be objectively tested. No! but feelings tend to produce conditions which are facts, and facts which can be verified.

A series of emotions, for example, tends to modify the conditions of a man's nature in such a way that after a certain cycle of repeated emotions a man's mental and even his bodily conditions may be changed. Violent emotions, it is well known, produce bodily changes: fear produces pallor: anger or shame cause the blood to flood the countenance. Emotions continued for a length of time cause distinct changes in the cells of body or brain. Feelings as such may not come within the range of observed, or objective facts; but the conditions, which repeated or recurrent emotions occasion, come within reach of observation and are capable of verification. It was impossible to gauge the emotions of the man who heard the appeal of the Sufite teacher; but it was quite possible to verify as a fact the change in his life and conduct which was due to the repeated emotions of which he was the subject.

Thus there is a sense in which feelings, if not verifiable

facts, are the parents of facts which can be observed and tested under the same conditions as other facts. We may not be able to enter into the emotional excitation of our fellow-men; but we can notice the changes in their life, conduct, and disposition.

We constantly notice such changes in man. This man, we say, was once generous, free with hand, kindly, sympathetic. Now he is, as we say, a different man, he is niggardly, sullen, reticent. Or again, this man was jealous, suspicious, cynical in speech, unfriendly in manner. Now he is open-hearted, sympathetic, lavishly generous in his appreciation of others.

We cannot bring a man's emotions under observation; but we can mark, as very patent and clearly-observed facts, the changes in word, manner, and character which have occurred. We act in this matter along the lines of common sense: we act according to the principle laid down by Christ. "By their fruits ye shall know them." We cannot follow the movement or activities of the seed in the soil; but we can mark and measure the fruit as it ripens. Yes, even the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear.

We cannot therefore class religious experience as wholly outside the range of observation. We know that the attendant emotions must be real for we can measure their results: feelings if not fully facts are yet the matrix of facts, and they can be known as real, because they bring to birth facts which operate upon life.

(β) We cannot depend upon our emotions: they must be disciplined and perhaps doubted; and yet, if I am not mistaken, emotions reveal to us one of the greatest facts in existence, viz., our possession of a soul or a spiritual nature. It is through sensations that we become aware

of the external world and gain knowledge of our own bodily envelope. We learn by contrast to discriminate between hard and soft, painful and pleasant, bitter and sweet, rough and smooth, through our sensations. Sensations are the media through which we open up communications with the physical world. I suggest that as sensations make us aware of our bodies: emotions make us aware of our souls. Emotions often result from sensations. We tread upon the sharp point of a nail: our sensation is one of pain; but an emotion is ours also: we are angry at the negligence which has left the nail where it could be trodden upon. Now this emotion opens up a communication—not as the sensation does with the physical world, but with the realm within where the capacities of anger and fear and joy and hope dwell. The child that cries, not because it has been hurt, but because its expectation has been disappointed or its pride wounded, is learning that besides a body which can feel pain, it possesses a soul which can feel vexation or annoyance: here it is learning that besides body there is soul: that besides the outward world, the world of physical things, there is the inner world which may be the scene of tragedies of which the outward world takes no count. In such experiences we become aware of the existence of a realm which is certainly not physical: we are brought to the gateway of another world, which, because it is not the world physical or natural in the physical sense, may be called the spiritual or psychical world.

We are inclined to concede perhaps too much to the claims of materialism when we limit facts only to things which can be measured by our senses: we measure things by our emotions quite as often as we do by our sensations.

Emotion brings us knowledge of our spiritual being. It is the index that other things than things physical affect us. A slight may be more keenly felt than a wound. Our anger may be stirred by a physical pang, it is true ; but we may feel a far greater anger at some act which leaves our body untouched. There are injuries for which no payment can compensate. The feelings, which gave rise to duelling, attest the truth that there are emotions closely connected with the sense of personal honour which demand satisfaction more urgently than any mere physical mishap : the light mention of a lady's name : an insinuation against personal integrity set the heart aflame. The soul is insurgent at such times : such experiences, though linked with a disproportionate moral sense, witnessed to the insistent power of spirit within. There are stages in history which, however stained by deplorable violence, mark the force of the spirit within : the men who vindicated their honour were ready to put their bodies in peril, because they felt that the demands of the soul at the moment were of more importance than the fear of physical injury.

The emotions often betray us, but they are witnesses that our souls are more than our bodies. Sensations make us aware of our bodies : emotions make us aware of our souls. Emotions therefore are powerful in two directions : they open the outward gate to action : they open the inward gate to the consciousness of the soul. Followed outward they may lead to very decisive action in the physical world : to change of conduct, to a revolution which can be called a conversion. Followed inward they may reveal to us depths and powers of our nature allied to the world of spirit.

When they work outwards they originate facts which

can be marked, and measured and brought to the test of adequate observation. The emotions which are inward facts become the parents of outward facts which all may know and verify: they help to disclose to us a great central fact of our nature—the possession of a soul.

Thus far we may affirm that emotions are closely allied to verifiable facts and may discover to us the existence of our spiritual nature.

(ii) A second objection may arise. It may be admitted that emotions and subjective experiences lead to acts which may be observed; but a fact which science can deal with is a fact which exhibits such features that it can be recognized when seen again. It must be capable of recurrence with characteristics which can be understood. Can we make such a claim on behalf of religious experience? Of course such an experience is not like a stone or an oyster—thousands of which may be found and examined in our laboratories; but religious experience is not an inchoate thing: it presents certain intelligible features; and in some of its deepest processes it shows a clear order or cycle.

(a) First then it presents intelligible features. We are speaking of the religious consciousness in man. An examination of this consciousness establishes certain tendencies, and these tendencies exhibit recognizable features. They are not vague, fluctuating, incoherent, they express demands of the soul which may be set forth with clearness. No doubt there is much admixture of frothy passion, but just as we can trace amid the white foam and dazzling spray the set of the waves, so amid the wild flare of untamed emotion we can detect the genuine demands or needs of the religious consciousness. It is as much a fact that man's religious consciousness de-

mands a Power upon which he can in some way depend as it is that he has a religious consciousness at all. There is no religion that I am aware of which does not sooner or later provide to meet this feeling of dependence. This has been considered a sort of necessity of man's nature by philosophical minds. The late Dean Mansel in his Bampton Lectures spoke of two principal modes of religious intuition, the feeling of dependence and the feeling of moral obligation (Lecture IV, p. 78). Schleiermacher deemed that this feeling of dependence was the essence of religion.

If the feeling of dependence is thus an essential in the religious consciousness, the desire for a complete accord or harmony between the God and the worshipper is also imperatively shown. The history of religions witnesses this. The Sufite Movement is the evidence that when this desire for harmony is not met the religious consciousness will find some way to supply it. Mohammedanism is the religion of an autocratic God: in its original form God is the law-giver—He is great and to be obeyed without question; but the souls of men asked for something more than a law-giver. The sense of Allah's power to command and to judge did not satisfy the heart. The Sufite Movement added to the idea of God's power that of His Love. Hence its success: it met the demands of the religious consciousness for harmony or fellowship with the object of worship.

Further, we live in a world which is being slowly pushed onward along the road of development. Man, with his restlessness of hope, would never be satisfied with a religion which spoke only in the past and present tenses: the great momentum of the advancing universe makes itself felt in his spirit, and his eyes are turned to

the future: he feels that he was not made to sit still: his religion must meet his instinct of progress. Even the somewhat fatalistic Buddhism looked forward to the Matreya Buddha, the Ajita, the unconquerable one, whose advent would bring blessing to the world.

Thus a religious consciousness knows what it wants. Consciousness of God seeks dependence: consciousness of moral obligation or of fear of Divine wrath seeks harmony with the Divine Power: consciousness of a path of the future provokes the desire for and assurance of progress. Now these are what I may call instincts of the religious consciousness: their existence is witnessed in the history of religions: they are feelings in man, which emerge into facts as we examine the development of religious thought and movement. We know something of the content of man's spiritual nature.

Thus without as yet touching upon Christian experiences, we have seen that religious experiences may be closely related to facts, so indissolubly bound up with them that it is difficult to treat the fact adequately without the experience or to separate the experience from the fact. Further, we have seen that the religious consciousness moves along intelligible lines, and reveals definite spiritual wants.

(β) The religious consciousness then exhibits intelligible features; but more, in its deepest activities it exhibits an orderly movement, which has been observed and noted by impartial minds. In treating of this I pass to definitely Christian experiences as they have been made the subject of careful study.

Such matters are no longer relegated to the attention of minor pietistic writers. The phenomena which were once regarded as delusive, fantastic, fanatical are now

seriously considered by men of scientific and philosophical mind. They have been made the subject of the late Prof. James's famous book: Prof. Granger in his book "The Soul of a Christian" has dealt with the matter with scholarly impartiality: Prof. Starbuck has written a treatise which applies scientific methods to the examination of these experiences. These phenomena can hardly be regarded as visionary, when they are accepted by careful and accurate observers as offering a fertile field of investigation. However subjective the associated emotions may be, the phenomena investigated enter the region of fact.

Prof. Starbuck, in his work on the "Psychology of Religion," has gathered with great diligence reports of religious experiences from various parts of the United States. These he endeavoured to classify. The materials so collected were submitted to the late Prof. James, whose work on "Religious Experiences" is so well known.

Prof. James was at first doubtful whether Prof. Starbuck would be able to collect materials sufficiently trustworthy: he thought that the replies sent in would not really represent results psychologically valid; he thought that they would be conventional echoes of expected phraseology, and therefore of "little significance," but on examining the results, Prof. James acknowledged the value of the book and wrote a preface. In this preface he declared that the pages of the book "group together a mass of hitherto unpublished facts, forming a most interesting contribution both to individual and to collective psychology. They interpret these facts with rare discriminatingness and liberality."

The phenomena of Christian experiences are thus recognized as facts worthy of scientific consideration.

Indeed, speaking here in Liverpool, I cannot forget that the eloquent voice of one honoured in this city and alive to the value of Christian experiences was raised up a few years ago pleading for the restoration of experimental preaching.

If then we may claim that religious experience is capable of providing a large number of facts which are worthy of scientific or psychological inquiry, it becomes interesting to know the results of such inquiry. When facts are submitted to science, science classifies them and sooner or later includes them in a portfolio which she calls a law. Can the facts of Christian experience be so treated? Time will not allow me to do more than state baldly the results.

Dr. Starbuck and Prof. James agree that the facts or phenomena seem to indicate a general harmony in the experiences. Thus Prof. James summarizes the experiences as generally exhibiting the following cycle. He affirms that under all discrepancies of creed there is a common nucleus to which these experiences bear testimony. This common nucleus consists of two parts: (1) an uneasiness followed by (2) its solution (Prof. James, "Varieties of Religious Experience," pp. 507, 508). According to Prof. Starbuck ("Psychology of Religion," pp. 158, 159) there are two types of the experience of spiritual awakening—one arising from a sense of incompleteness: the other, the eruptive type, as he calls it, which is characterized by the breaking-up of evil habits. But both types have much in common. Both go through three stages of experience, viz.: Conviction, Crisis, New Life. It will be seen that this agrees with Prof. James's twofold division. The uneasiness which he mentions corresponds with conviction, and his

"solution" covers what Prof. Starbuck calls Crisis and New Life. The new life, he says, is the real self. Throughout it is the real self which is being sought. After the awakening contentment with the lower life is impossible and no rest is reached till the higher life is accepted as the true life in which the true self is found.

"The feeling of 'oneness' (with God or Christ) is the experience in which the most prominent thing which presents itself at the time is the sense of freedom and harmony that follows the change, and the consciousness that the life is now the completer embodiment of the larger spiritual world" (Starbuck, "Psychology and Religion," p. 161).

It is to be remembered that these descriptions of spiritual experiences are given by men who approach the matter from the standpoint of intellectual inquirers: they affirm that the experiences are not only numerous and sufficient to be considered exhibitions of fact, but that these experiences are marked by a common note: they follow a clear and regular cycle: they can be classified under one type: they indicate what we may call a psychical law. They are not therefore the wild imaginations or hallucinations of diseased minds: they are too orderly in their sequence for this. They, moreover, cannot be classed as merely subjective; for they operate in actual life in changed habits: in the subjugation of selfish tendencies or habits.

It may, however, still be pleaded that however interesting these facts of experience may be they are not altogether like facts in the physical world where things can be handled, and weighed, and measured. This we may admit. The facts of the moral and spiritual world are

not matters which can be brought to the test of tables of weights and measures. We do not propose, however, to surrender at this epoch of the world's history to materialism which we have been told is now "a pauper in the realm of philosophy". We start with the hypothesis that man is more than flesh and bones. We start on the assumption that man by virtue of his religious consciousness is a being greater than the beasts which perish. We believe that in interrogating his religious experiences we are entering a region which is capable of yielding results which can be met with nowhere else. In doing so, we are not deserting common sense or reason; we are making use of the one being in whose nature is lodged the answer to many of the questions which have been vainly asked of the great and inscrutable universe of material things. For what is man according to science? He is the subject of an evolutionary process. Yes, and of an evolutionary process of a special character; for evolution, having produced man as the physiological climax of her work, has shifted her gear, as it were, and is continuing her work on the social and moral plane. Social and ethical evolution has succeeded physical evolution. Such was the view of Prof. Fiske among others. Thus man is a creature still incomplete and the process of his completion is now in the social and ethical realms of his nature.

Further, man is a being in whose nature is folded up the story of all the past processes which have contributed to his making. Each individual born into the world repeats during his ante-natal history the order of the past. He is a piece of documentary evidence witnessing to all that went before him. The world is bound up in him. To interrogate him is not only to interrogate the highest

product of nature, but its most complex, its most significant product. He is a true microcosm for he carries the whole evolutionary order, as it were, within himself.

Man is thus a reflection of the process of the universe ; and as such we should expect him to be fitted to respond to the evolutionary forces about him. As in his physical nature he attests the working of the earlier processes of nature, we should expect him to respond to the later. He might be likened to an *Æolian* harp which vibrates to the universal breath ; but the harp when it gives forth its melody is an interpreter of the delicacy and harmony of the forces which breathe around it. And it ought not to surprise us to find in man some capacity of interpreting in his experiences the processes of the universe. In interrogating him we interrogate the one being whose history and experiences can yield the richest results. Hence there arises a probability that in the experiences of man in acquiring his full endowment of social and moral capacities there may be found, not merely a few transient impressions, but impressions which may bear witness to great facts and perhaps to laws which govern the order of his development.

We cannot go beyond a probability ; but we can at least plead that such probability exists. I might add here that if this line of argument establishes such a probability, the converging line of philosophical thought which speaks of the moral sense or conscience as an *a priori* law of the human mind only serves to add to the probability that the investigation of these experiences will be fruitful.

If man is still the subject of our evolutionary process and if that process is now working in the social and

moral sphere, then the inward experiences of man become more significant; they are the witnesses of the working of some great world force: they indicate the trend of all things.

And what is this trend? Let us go back to the scientific investigation of religious experiences made by Dr. Starbuck. We saw that according to him and Prof. James these experiences follow what may be called a psychical law. They go beyond mere emotion, for they emerge into life; they indicate the subduing of selfish passions. But let Prof. Starbuck speak, and give us his description of this experience. "It is," he says, "a process of unselfing." As examples he quotes the following records of such experience. "I began to work for others." "I had more tender feeling toward my family and friends." "I felt everybody to be my friend." "It is clear," concludes Prof. Starbuck, "that in a large percentage of cases an immediate result of conversion is to call the person out from himself into active sympathy with the world outside" (p. 128). Further, he notices a heightened worth of self closely bound up with the altruistic impulses. The central fact underlying both is the formation of a new ego, a fresh point of reference for mental states (*ibid.*, pp. 129, 130). As we read this statement of what is deemed the central fact in this experience our minds are carried irresistibly back to the language of St. Paul. "The central fact," says the modern scientific inquirer, "the central fact is a new ego." "I live," says the Apostle, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The Apostle realizes the fact of this new Ego.

Whether therefore we approach these spiritual experiences from the personal standpoint, or from the standpoint of impartial inquiry, the central idea is the same.

Spiritual experiences include the moving from a lesser to a larger life: from the life self-centred to a life centred outside self, a life animated by strong altruistic impulses: a life in which old things are passed away and all things (i.e. the outlook upon all things and therefore their relations to the soul) have become new.

I do not wish to lay down any limit to the incidental features of such experiences, nor is it necessary to suppose that they are always related to some fixed epoch of time: this is the case with what Prof. Starbuck calls the "eruptive" type; but he includes others in which the sense of life's incompleteness has been realized and the soul has stepped forth from the narrow cell of self into the fuller and completer life. Whether, in fact, this changed aspect of things has come about quickly and accompanied by some vivid consciousness of change or whether the change has been reached by insensible stages, the order and significance of the change is the same. It is the same curve on the railroad whether it has been taken at express speed or at a prudently creeping pace.

We have sought facts: we have found that spiritual experiences may be brought within the field of observable facts: we have found that there is a certain type or cycle which they follow—at any rate in Christian experiences.

II. These experiences must be read in connexion with their environment: their significance largely depends on environing conditions. A fact cannot be separated from its environment, i.e. from the circumstances and influences associated with the occurrence. The naked fact alone cannot disclose its own significance.

A straw will show in what direction the wind blows, but we must know where the straw is placed: the gust of wind which rushes through a tunnel, though it shakes

the straw will not tell me the true quarter of the wind. If I want to ascertain the fact about the wind's direction, I must not only notice the movement of the straw, but I must understand the environment of the straw. The significance of the fact is the true fact: it is not the shaking of the straw, but the circumstances under which the straw shook, which make up the fact.

In other words, the incidental phenomenon must not be taken as the whole fact: the real fact is only known when its significance is ascertained and its significance is only ascertained when the conditions of the phenomenon are taken into account. I must know the envelope, so to speak, of the fact: the letter is one thing but the envelope with its address and postmark may explain the letter. A mere incident is often mistaken for a full fact: only when we take the incident in connexion with the conditions under which it occurred, can we claim to possess the full fact, or the fact with its significance. When Patrick Henry said "Cæsar had his Brutus, Charles I his Cromwell, and George III his . . ." there was excitement in the legislature of Virginia (Bancroft, Vol. III, p. 468): this was the incident, but the full fact is only understood when the political crisis of the moment is known. The fact is far more than the mere words, or even the excitement in the Chamber of Debate: the significance of the fact is only understood as we realize the temper of two peoples at the moment.

If I may advance one further illustration I would select one from New Testament story. The incident of St. Paul's vision on the road to Damascus is not to us a complete fact without some acquaintance with the circumstances: to grasp the fact and its significance we

need to have some insight into the state of St. Paul's mind: it is only in the light of the circumstances before and after that we can fully understand the fact which transformed Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Apostle.

Hence facts are more inclusive things than is commonly supposed: they are not the vulgar, isolated incidents in which Silas Wegg delighted: to be of service in historical criticism they must be related to circumstances: we must know not only that the straw moves, we must know when it moved: we must know not only the orator's words, but the temper of the people among whom he spoke. The fact is not the fact when it is stripped of its flesh and blood and reduced to the bare bones of an incident: to know the fact, I must know it as it was: I must not be asked to accept its skeleton instead of itself. It is not the words of a conqueror's song only which can give me their significance. I must know the circumstances which roused the soul to give forth the stirring and undying words. Behind the fact of the song stand other facts, which must be realized before I can grasp its full and true meaning. I may illustrate this by reference to an incident dealt with in Old Testament criticism. In speaking of Miriam's Song of the Sea, one German critic (Kittel) says that the song bears "the marks of originality. It would be groundless scepticism," he says, "to maintain that the song is an artificial echo of the later legends concerning the passage through the Red Sea. Such an idea is psychologically incomprehensible, and is absolutely condemned by the exquisite simplicity and grandeur of the poem." "Where is there (he asks) an instance of fiction produced by later generations displaying such strength and purity of inspiration" ("Hist. of the Hebrews," p. 226). His

meaning is quite clear: no mere tradition of a great event could have inspired a poem of such natural simplicity and force. Behind the poem stands real emotion produced by a real event. No later generation could so identify itself with the emotions befitting the experience. Memory can never be a substitute for genuine feeling. There are psychological laws, which govern the powers of expression. Emotions are like the ripples on the water after a stone has been cast into it: they lessen in force in proportion as they recede from the centre of disturbance: only when the sense of a great event is vivid can the emotional wave reach its maximum height.

From this argument the critic reaches the conclusion that only a real and striking incident can have given birth to such a genuinely natural outburst of feeling. Historical fact lies behind the clear-hearted emotion expressed in the song.

The same kind of argument is carried further by the critic. He is speaking of the spirit of national unity and self-assertion which were manifested in Israel. Israel possesses in her history certain qualities of durability and coherence, qualities which guarantee national life. "Such a work," says Kittel, "does not accomplish itself. It is only wrought when there is a personality behind the mass, towering above them, urging them on, setting on fire with its holy enthusiasm the consciousness of nationality. Israel became a nation at the Exodus. Moses created it. Without him Israel would have remained what it was before." So far for the formation of Israel's national life: its genesis is unintelligible without some dominant personality.

There is something further to be said. "There remains," says Kittel, "still a class of facts which are even

less capable than the successes already mentioned of being explained apart from a specially inspired personality. I mean the new religious creation in Israel. . . . Nothing is less likely to arise spontaneously out of the depths of a people's life than those new creations which make epochs in the history of religion and morals. The mere name of Moses would do nothing. If legend had created the bearer of that name, another must have actually filled his place" (ibid., p. 240). In other words, behind a religious revolution there stands the dominant and inspiring personality. Now let us return to our consideration of facts. We wish to follow the scientific principle of basing our theories on facts.

But what are facts? Not merely the naked incident which is only the skeleton of the fact; but the whole fact, i.e., the thing which happened together with the characteristic envelope, so to speak, of the happening. Not the words of the orator but the circumstances which lifted his soul to effective utterance. Not the speech of Demosthenes, but the temper of the speaker and his audience which led them to cry "Let us march against Philip". Not the naked fact that seven bishops were put on trial, but the flowing spirit of liberty to which their action gave expression. Not the naked fact that Saul of Tarsus had a strange experience and became an Apostle, but the powers which wrought upon his spirit to produce this change. We cannot be said to grasp the fact, i.e., ascertain its true significance, apart from the conditions which made the fact possible. These conditions are a part of the true fact. It is the part of historical science or scientific history to take cognizance of these conditions. We may take a stone and observe the marks upon its surface: it is a stone scratched over with a net-

work of slender lines. This is a fact ; but it is a fact which standing alone does not possess much significance. When, however, we add the knowledge of the circumstances under which the stone was found, the meaning of the fact becomes clear : it is a glacier stone. The history of the moving world, of changes in temperature, of the action of the laws of nature, is written upon the stone. Here are marks which attest the action of the gigantic and persistent forces of the world. We add a further circumstance : the place where the stone was found : a place perhaps where to-day no glacier exists : then further light breaks upon us : as this is a stone bearing marks of the action of ice, and as the glacier itself has melted away, it becomes clear that in earlier times the ice cap of the earth reached far down to the spot where the ice-marked stone was found. It is a familiar story exemplified in the Glacier Garden of Switzerland. It may illustrate our argument : the finding of the stone with certain markings is the naked incident : the knowledge of the action of the ice mass is the illuminating aspect of the fact.

Now let us apply this thought. The change wrought in, say, St. Paul's life, is the naked incident : the illuminating aspect of the incident is found in the circumstance that a spiritual force, radiating from a Jewish citizen put to death as a criminal, was the working environment of the incident. The change is the ice-marked stone : the name or personality (nature) of Jesus Christ is as the glacier force. The whole fact is not the mere change, but the change in the light of the powerful influence which accomplished the change.

Whatever our views may be as to the credibility of certain Gospel narratives, the power of the personality of

Christ in the narrative of the Apostle Paul remains a fact.

And this power is not limited to one age or one individual. The same kind of change, exhibiting the same typical features, is repeated all through the Christian centuries. What St. Paul experienced is experienced by St. Augustine, by John Tauler, by Martin Luther, by John Bunyan: by a great multitude whom no man can number. Here then is an experience which can be verified in fact, which is continuous, which follows a recognized order, and has become a matter of acknowledged scientific interest. We are not confined to its subjective aspect: the emotions, which are involved, are full of interest, but as far as the argument is concerned they are only conditions of transition from one fact to another. The change in the subject of them is a historical fact. Behind this fact of a life-change there were these subjective phenomena. Behind the fact there is an emotion, and behind the emotion another fact. Behind the fact that St. Paul's life was transfigured there was a period of emotional experience: behind the emotional experience was another fact—the personality of Jesus Christ. The same may be said of all the succeeding experiences of the same order.

The whole mass of these individual metamorphoses of life has behind it the personality of Christ. As the wavelets spread from the centre of disturbance, so have these spiritual experiences rippled over the ocean of time. The power of His personality has flung itself across the centuries; it has exercised sway over the minds of those who did not know Him or could not know Him in the flesh. His influence is great in the world of thought, and in the world of conduct. Men everywhere recognize

that He is the one personage in history whose character has become the standard for all noble human life, but besides this widespread and more conventional recognition of His power, there is another, a deeper, and more spiritual acknowledgment of His might: it is found in the souls of the great multitude whose lives attest a power in Christ's personality which has entered into the innermost depths of their being. They will not speak of Christ merely as a great historical character: they will not describe Him as a great exemplar of life to men: they declare that the power of Christ's very life has entered into their lives: if they describe their experiences they will say that it is the experience of Christ living in them: the historical events of our Lord's life have become spiritual types to them: they are buried with Christ when the powers of the lower nature are crucified with Him: through an experience which means the death of the old and lower nature they pass to a life lived in Christ and not in self. The power of Christ's personality has made itself some way effective in them—in an experience which they have known, and in a life known of all men. Discount as much as you please the numbers who have claimed this experience: make allowance for self-deceptions or transitory hallucinations: the residuum of cases is ample: the energy which they have given to religious movements of revival or missionary activity: the resemblance of the experiences whether of an eruptive or a quietly transitional type: the common ardour with which their love to their Lord is proclaimed: all show the working of a power, real, practical, indubitable. Behind this great series of phenomena extending from the days of St. Paul to the present time stands the personality of Christ.

Hence we must conclude that the power of Christ's personality originated a spiritual influence which like a spreading wave has rolled over the world and is still moving with a force which time has not weakened. We may regard this influence as a power from the past or as a present power. If we regard this influence as the historical continuation of an influence which began with the disciples we must admit the transcendent power of His personality as a historic character. In the other case, we must regard this influence as the witness of a power which is living and working to-day. Either the Christ of history exerts a continuous influence over centuries or the Christ of experience is a living Christ to-day.

It will be said that the reality of these experiences does not help the argument for the Divine origin of Christianity. If by this it is meant that these experiences do not demonstrate the heavenly character of Christ's mission, my answer is twofold.

First, it has not been advanced for such a purpose. All that has so far been claimed is that these experiences are so linked with the thought and person of Christ that they attest even after well-nigh 2000 years the power of Christ's personality.

Secondly, the words "heavenly" and "divine" are often used in an unreal way. How do we discriminate between the heavenly or the earthly character of a mission? By long-continued influence I may conclude the power of a certain historic personality, but long-continued influence might not be good influence, and however strong or long continued such influence might be I should not deem it heavenly in origin unless it were heavenly in the quality of its influence. I do not conclude things

to be divine or heavenly by reason of their mere power ; but when an influence lifts men to higher principles of action, when it restrains evil habits, modifies unlovely qualities, disciplines and softens character : then I see the tokens of a Divine power. The powers exerted by great personalities in history can only be judged to be "divine" or "heavenly" when they work for the highest good of men.

Now the work of these Christian experiences is always the recognition of the higher which claims to surmount the lower : it is the expression of a beautiful consciousness concerning the spirit in which life should be lived : it is, as Dr. Starbuck has described it, a process of "unselfing".

Now let me recall the scientific theory that the evolutionary process having attained its physiological goal has now been working since the appearance of man along the lines of social and moral development. Its goal is no longer physical, but ethical : it no longer strives to make man a fitter animal, but a better being. It does so by introducing a deeper sense of social responsibility. The length of childhood increases as we rise in the scale of being : this lengthening tends to develop the sense of family responsibility : affection grows through responsibility : we love best what costs us most. The increasing complexities which civilization brings show the interdependence of man upon man. The sense of social responsibility widens. Dives cannot ignore Lazarus at his gate. Man cannot live his life in selfish isolation. He is responsible for his brother. He begins to see that a selfish life is a life which ignores the very bonds which hold the social world together. We are realizing this truth more and more from day to day. The evolutionary process has forced it upon our attention. The selfish life

is seen to be theoretically intolerable. The recognition of the need of "unselfing" is the last word of civilization. Is the evolutionary process which produces this conviction a dead force? or is it the witness of the working of the living God? Is it perchance the witness of the work of the Holy Spirit? Are we not slow to recognize that God Himself is behind the forces we call evolutionary? If the trend of thought is in the same direction as that of our religious ideals, if in the language of the Apocalypse—the earth is helping the woman—then one great need of the soul is met. We can see harmony between the things we know and the things we long for. At any rate if the last word of civilization is the need of an "unselfing" process, then the last word of civilization is the first and often repeated word of Christ. This "unselfed" life was the central idea of His teaching and the true significance of His sacrifice. His was the "unselfed life": He left it as the ideal life for man. When this "unselfed" life becomes the working principle in all human lives, the last hour of the world's worst pain and the first hour of the golden age will have come.

But meanwhile Christian experiences bear witness to a power which works this "unselfing" in the souls of men. Christian experiences exhibit in the individual the conflict against self which is being slowly fought out in the world. The individual who has this experience is a microcosm, or to state the same in Apostolic language, he is a kind of first-fruits of God's creatures. In these experiences, as we mark the unselfing process, we see the earnest of that great inheritance which will be ours when the creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption, which is selfishness, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

If science teaches us that the experiences of past evolutionary history are written in the physical frame of man, Christian faith teaches us that in these religious experiences is written the prophecy of the great deliverance which in Christ will be to us and to all people.

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